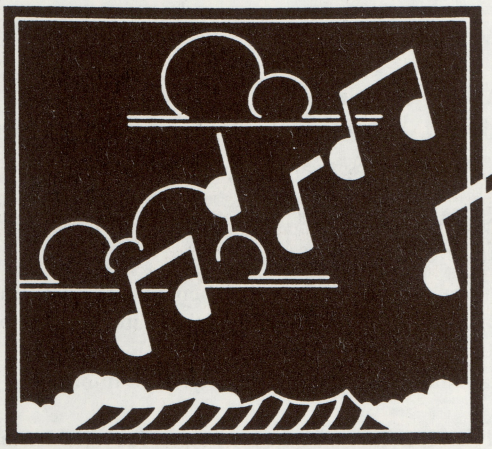
Depot Town Rag

June 1988

FREE 100% BAS CONTENT

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198



Blues & Jazz FESTIVAL

Radio station WEMU & the Depot Town Association present

1988 Frog Island Tent *Blues & Jazz* Festival

Saturday, June 25 from noon to midnight

Saturday, June 25 — What a day at Frog Island Park, by the Huron River in Ypsilanti's Depot Town. A rustic setting, a cool and airy tent, excellent food, a cash bar, room for the kids to play and terrific music — rain or shine.

This is the finest lineup the festival has presented in its seven years. It may be the finest day of blues and jazz to grace the state all summer long. The best of Detroit — and the best of New York City, Chicago and New Orleans, served up in a relaxing, intimate, neighborly atmosphere, akin to a huge picnic with the best music in the world — blues, jazz, big band, Cajun, Caribbean and more.

The lineup is loaded with 'firsts' — Marcus Belgrave meets Mr. B — Kirk Lightsey and Marcus present original orchestrations of their own music with a big band — the Vibration Society and Wayne Toups make their Mid-western debuts — blues saxophone star A. C. Reed fronts his own band, the Spark Plugs.

Precious, delightfully hot moments to treasure — at Frog Island '88.

The food will be delicious this year. Ethnic cuisine, vegetarian fare and American eats will fill our new food tent with tempting aromas.

We are very proud of Frog Island '88. It is a day you will savor for a long time after the last blue notes have faded away. Bring the kids (under 12, free), blankets and lawnchairs; call your friends, get a big group together and enjoy our special discount rates.

Saturday, June 25 — What a day! Come join us.

June 25 at Frog Island:

Noon THE HOT CLUB

This powerful Detroit trio features the quicksilver guitar of Rob Tye, sparked by a roiling rhythm sections.

1 p.m. MR. B & MARCUS BELGRAVE

The premier duet performance by Ann Arbor's famed pianist and Detroit's internationally known trumpeter. A Frog Island exclusive!

2 p.m. THE NEW BREED BEBOP SOCIETY

This smoking Motor City big band will perform the music of two very special guests — the acclaimed pianist Kirk Lightsey and Marcus Belgrave. A Frog Island exclusive!

4 p.m. THE TRINIDAD/TRIPOLI STEEL BAND

Soka, reggae, calypso — sunny Carribean music from a beloved band . . . now a Frog Island tradition

6 p.m. THE VIBRATION SOCIETY

The music of Rahsaan Roland Kirk, performed by former bandmates Bill Hardman, Steve Turre, Junior Cook, Hilton Ruiz, Walter Booker, Leroy Williams and vocalists Suzanne Diewan and Timmy Shepherd in their area debut. Bright moments!

8 p.m. WAYNE TOUPS & ZYDECA JUN

Direct from New Orleans for his Mid-western premiere, Toups' band is a hard rocking Zydeco wonder. Queen Ida and Buckwheat, move over!

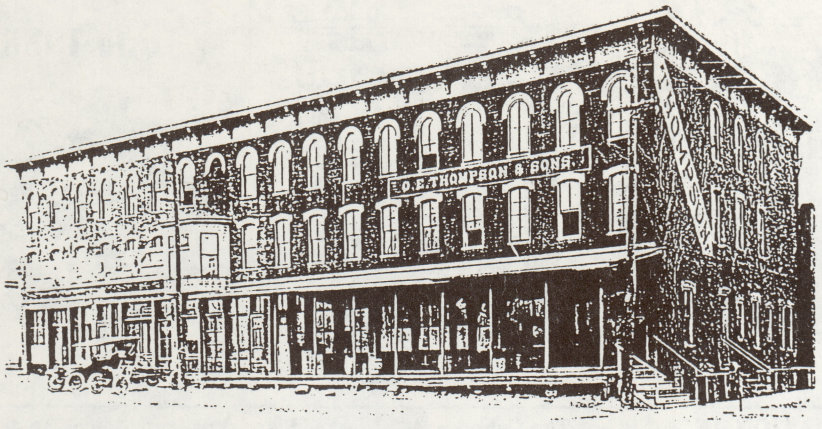
10 p.m. A.C. REED & THE SPARK PLUGS

A Chicago blues saxophone blowout — one of the Windy City's greatest hornmen, backed by A.C.'s crack band, The Spark Plugs.

Volunteers — for set-up, ticket-taking, security, hospitality or clean-up get free admission (plus drink tickets) for the rest of the day. Call Bonni Rosen-Fine to pledge your help (phone 482-FINE).

Tickets - $9.50 per person by mail: "Depot Town Jazz", Frog Island Tickets, Box 350, Ypsilanti, MI 48197

$12.50 at the gate the day of performance.



The Thompson Block (left to right - from Klawitter's Thompson Building Antiques Mall to Fantasee Lighting) on the north east corner of River and Cross Streets across from the MCRR depot. Note the signage, shed roofs over sidewalks, cornice still intact, bay window addition, age of autos. What year do you figure this is?

Thompson Building Antique Mall's

Paul G. Klawitter has tried out his new color scheme of light grey, dark grey, black and maroon on the first-floor north bays of that edifice-complex. With HDC approval, he'll continue the theme over the whole Thompson building. Paul also hopes to erect a replica of the original cornice at the top of that block. His long experience in building, re-building and restoration bring a most appropriate talent to the historic district. Now, that's what we call a pro-active tenant!

River Street work ahead of schedule

The surveyors say they've never had to work so fast in their career, since the contractors are right behind them with their equipment on River Street these last two months. Mayor Murdock says an even bigger job awaits them in Ann Arbor, and they're probably eager to finish this one.

Curb cuts, re-paving, crossing gates and walk ways are all ahead of the announced schedule. Conrail will do the railroad crossing — and the State still hasn't figured out how to cross from the Sidetrack to Miller Motors. The new paving is expected to be finished by the first of the month — all the way from Michigan Avenue to just beyond the mayor's house on North River Street!

Thompson Building Mall

Over 4000 square feet of dealers

412 North River • 484-4288

Ypsilanti's Farmers' Market

in historic Depot Town

Every Wed. & Sat.

8 a.m. — 3 p.m.

The Commercial Italianate Architectural Style

—in Ypsilanti's Nineteenth Century Depot Town

All rights reserved - The Depot Town Rag, 1988

Part Six: Window caps and rows

—Here's looking at *you*, Leonardo.

There are plenty of hoods hanging out in Depot Town, and most of them have their roots in the Mediterranean. But don't be alarmed. This is not another one of those stories blaming today's organized crime on people of Italian ancestry. This is just the final installment in a series of pieces about the Commerical Italianate style or architecture found in nineteenth century districts such as ours.

One of the hallmarks of the Italianate style -- whether it be the Italianate Cube, the Italian Villa or the Commercial Italianate structures found in the depot towns and downtowns all across America -- is the header above the windows, set in rows along the front of the building. Such a design amenity served to repeat the horizontality of the overall design and, esepecially in examples such as ours where the cornices have been removed, are the only design element still remaining to help carry them from side to side.

The Italianate window 'hood' design probably serves more than any other element to commemorate the philsophical shift in through from the time of the Renaissance. After decades of focusing on superior beings who lived in 'up there' somewhere, mankind decided it was time to look around on earth and see what was going on in that realm. Contrast the Gothic direction of a pair of praying hands to the 'let's take a look around' posture of a person shielding his or her eyes from the sun with a make-shift hand visor held up to the eyebrow area. That's the look of an Italianate building.

The strong horizontal overhang even remains when the cornice is removed. The eyebrows remain -- and they are repeated in the cap stones mounted above the windows.

These windows, of course, are mounted in rows, according to the layout of the floor plan inside. Some of them happen in pairs, others in trios. and even a few are found in fours. Four or more, it seems, must have been too far for the beams and trusses to span, even with all that lumber coming south from the forests of upper Michigan. Today's building codes conform to sixteen-inch centers between wall studs, and 4 X 8 plywood seems to determine the scale for the rest of the buildings put up since we ran out of the unlimited supply of building material.

It's a favorite homily for people working in these old buildings to thump the wall and proclaim, "They sure don't build 'em like they used too!" No, indeed, they don't. These buildings were put up long before there were any kinds of codes, but don't forget about the ones that fell down! The only ones left, today, survived, not by plan, but by accident.

Scale is an item of prime interest, perhaps, only to those who actually carry the old parts around or climb on a ladder or scaffolding to work on them. The windows in the Follett House ballroom, for instance, didn't look like such a big job to replace, until the owners talked to the manufacturers of double-glazed retrofits. These eleven-foot-high behemoths looked like a different kind of problem when they unpacked them from their cases two years ago.

Window caps in Depot Town are found in three media - brick, cast iron and tin. The design of the Cross Street Bridge in 1986 saw yet another medium, poured concrete. Architect, Denis Schmeideke, decided against replicating the classical ballustrade of the previous bridge, and sought, instead, to repeat the undulating flow of window cap designs found throughout the district.

Still more local news continues . . . throughout this month's *Rag*.
—Model city
—City Body's front and back
—Serenity House entry
—Thompson Block Mall facade
—D & B Auto Sales flap
—Sidetrack sidetracked
—River Street construction

(Editor's note: With all the construction going on this month in Ypsilanti's historic Depot Town, the monthly *Depot Town Rag* could easily become a daily. Here are a few short news items from up and down this block:

Antiquities re-discovered when River Street contractors were surprised to find a wooden 'entry box' burried beneath the Cross Street garage door to Miller Motors. The structure was used to house the water intake to the building. Very near the installation were found the controls for the sprinkler system in the Thompson block — across the street!

And, speaking of old things, has anyone noticed how Jack Miller got younger with each new publication about his unique Hudson dealership? Only last year, as the papers and magazines told it, Jack was fifty. Now, according to the papers in New York and Chicago, he's forty-three? How does that work, Jack? Will we soon be seeing Miller Motors as a Hollywood feature film? We compliment the national media for recognizing this stellar uniqueness in Depot Town, (Not Jack's age — but his historic auto dealership!)

Miller's Ice Cream Parlor will soon see their lovely south-facing sun porch opened to the summer trade. Accessible from the front-side only, at first, the rear entry will soon open from the parking lot. Add this spot to the ever-growing list of great sittin' spots on this block.

Carver Cosntruction is expanding into the former B & D Plumbing space on River Street. Stop in and admire their craft. The new office walls are the best testimonial to their great skill.

Memorial Plaques returned to bridge

After more than a three-year absence, the City has replaced the 1919 World War memorial plaques to the Cross Street Bridge. A monolith was erected at the west end -right next the the new City-installed steps leading into Riverside Park. All was in readiness for the annual Memorial Day Parade on May 30th.

Old Town Restaurant
Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
38 East Cross

New/old facade at City Body

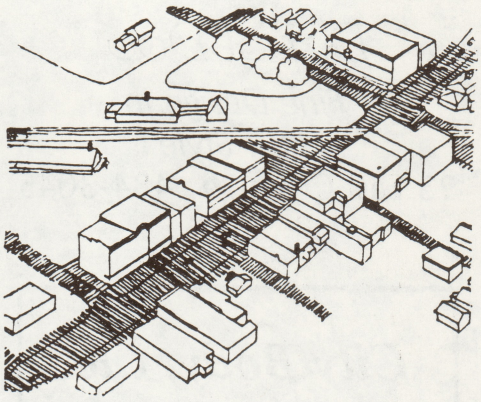
Long covered by 'modern' tile, the first-floor-front of City Body is once again open to view. Richie and Dillon took their crow-bars to that false front last month and were surprised to find clerestory windows on the east bay and cement blocks in the west bay. Subsequent remodeling will bring both bays into the same configuration with center entrances, side-lights and true Italianate detailing — much like it must have been in the 19th Century. Welcome this old jewel back to the block.

The back yard's impressive, too! In addition to all this treasure-hunting, City Body's Scott and Bruce Sobbry have begun to clear the fencing, shack and weeds from their back lot this month. Nearly an acre of land adjacent to the Huron River, the space has often been described as a 'junk yard' since the 1930's, but will soon afford much needed additional parking in what is becoming a crowded commercial district. After several truck-loads of refuse are hauled away, crushed limestone will be spread and leveled over the newly developed land to make a remarkable addition to the Depot Town landscape.

Red Rooster Pizza and Dairy Bar

has taken over the space of the former Pronto Pizza, but it sure doesn't look the same. The front dining room is totally remodeled with the new hardwood floor, white paint on the ornate ceiling plasterwork, panelling, tables, counters and ceiling fans. Owners, Marc Engebretsen and Al Dancho have presented their exterior remodeling plans to the Historic District Commission and we'll soon see a new sign — with awning to follow. 'Red Rooster' is not entirely new to the area, since Al has operated a popular Belleville bar with that name for the past nine years. The Depot Town address is just another pin in the map for his fast-growing empire.

The Vitamin Shoppe
Vitamins, Herbs,
Nutritional Suppliments
9 East Cross • 485-2711



Model City — little (new) Depot Town

A scale model of Depot Town on exhibit in the Old Caboose shows all the buildings in the district - jammed into an eighteen-inch square. A tiny wooden toy train is at the crossing and three-story buildings are only an inch and a half high. Still, the project of students in Community High School's 19th Century Architecture class is a physical reference to the spatial relationships in the district. The Merchants Committee may find the tool useful in helping to plot and plan for next year's holiday lighting scheme.

Ike's Depot Town Barbershop
40 East Cross • 483-6300

City Body, Inc.
20 East Cross
Front Alignments
Special - **$24.95**

A boon to local communication

Hear here!

Ma Bell has installed two more outdoor telephones in the district. The first to appear on the block was (1) the wooden phone booth at the corner of Aubree's Saloon (nee Alibi Bar) at least twenty years ago. It was painted Bell Green, had a folding door, an overhead light and even a phone book. It's been remodeled and replaced many times over and now looks like a space-age aluminum space capsule (without a phone book).

But today's communication needs are greater and the district's systems have been upgraded. Now you can walk about the block call people up from (2) the south corner of the the Ypsilanti Farmers' Market — or from (3) and the north entry to Riverside Park. In fact, you can stroll through the neighborhood and make a note of the numbers and then have yourself 'paged' almost anywhere in Depot Town this summer.

Many Depot Towners still fall back on the older, pre-Alexander Graham Bell method and just sit on a bench until they see the person with whom they wish to communciate. Then they lean on the nearest building or stand in the street and talk to each other. Longer distances often require post cards. With Depot Town scenes on them.

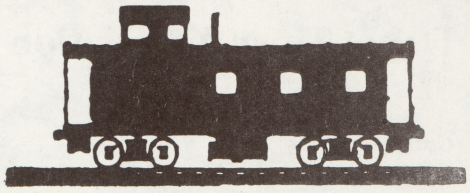
New kids on the block: D & B Auto Sales

— In the small garage on Ninde Street -started their career in this district under a storm cloud, but the weather seems to be clearning up this month. Fellow merchants, neighbors and passers-by complained about cars parked in the street's right-of-way, illegal dumping, barking dogs and the general disarray seen in that often-opened, never-successful address. A major difficulty at that location is the fact that there is no parking space for the autos being worked on — unless, of course, the tenants make friends with their neighbors and use *their* private parking spaces. After an awkward beginning, progress is being made.

Sidetrack sidetracked temporarily

After a little more than a week of being closed, The Sidetrack re-opened its doors to their loyal clientele in mid-May. Management at that favorite corner pub needed more time than was available to get licensing items in order and, now that that's figured out, everything is back to normal — which is the usual top-quality and what the Ann Arbor News calls "the best hamburger in town."

Center-stage entry at the Hansen building now divides Cross Street Antiques from Standard Printing as an elegant entrance to the second floor Serenity House. The same stairway used to lead to the Fraternal Order of Eagles upstairs club rooms but, after painting, carpet and artful lighting, creates one of the grandest entries on the street. Rex Richie and Doug Dillon did the contracting on the clever re-do.



June 1988

for the good of the block

Artists & Artisans
7:30 p.m. Monday 6/6
Caboose

Merchants Committee
8:30 a.m. Thursdays
6/2 & 6/16
Old Town Restaurant

Foundation
8:00 p.m. Thursday 6/2
Caboose

Association
7:30 p.m. Thursday 6/16
Caboose

Antique Engine club
7:30 p.m. Thursday 6/23
Freight House

Frog Island
Blues & Jazz Festival
noon-midnight
Saturday 6/25

Towers to be featured

The tenth anniversary Heritage Festival will focus upon Ypsilanti's unique towers, according to publicist and Depot Town maven, Carolyn McKeever. She'll feature them on posters, brochures and ads in the newspapers and magazines. Just to get ready for the occasion, *The Rag* will feature those seen from this river valley in it's July publication. Send in your drawings and/or photographs to The Old Caboose before the third Thursday and you'll see them here next month.

August's issue will feature the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the railroad to Ypsilanti, Michigan. Another sesquicentennial to celebrate!

THE DEPOT TOWN RAG:

A publication of the Depot Town Association, Inc., a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to preserving the unique character of the neighborhood and to the enhancement of its business climate.

The Depot Town Association, Inc.,
Tom Dodd, President
The Caboose, 400 Market Place
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

Jim MacDonald's Antiques
Apple Annie's
Vintage Clothing
29 East Cross • 481-0555

YPSILANTI RECYCLING PROJECT
651 Rice Street
(just north of the Farmers' Market in Ypsilanti's historic Depot Town
Open every Saturday
9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Collecting newspaper, glass, used motor oil and ferrous cans
A non-profit organization

RIVER ARTWORKS
CUSTOM FRAMING
DESIGNER MATS
48 E. CROSS
DEPOT TOWN
482-8785

Miller's SINCE 1896
ICE CREAM
Open All Year!
42 E. CROSS
HISTORIC DEPOT TOWN

Depot Town Association
19 May 1988

Guests:

Ron Miller, chair, Heritage Festival and executive director, Washtenaw Council for the Arts

Sue Dickinson, City of Ypsilanti Community and Economic Development Department

Mike Agar, City of Ypsilanti, Public Works Department

Gary Urick, Freight House Properties Manager

Mark Engebretsen, partner, Red Rooster Pizza and Dairy Bar

Edwin Simpson, artist from North Window Studios

DTA welcomes new area businessmen Marc Engebretsen and his partner, Al Dancho, to Cross Street. The Red Rooster will make a fine addition to the area's eateries and its appearance, as some major renovation work is being completed.

Treasury - no report.

Standing Committees

Membership/volunteerism - Bonnie Rosen is continuing to update mailing and membership lists. She is also on the look out for last-minute 'Ypsi Opry' volunteers or those looking ahead to Frog Island Blues/Jazz Festival. Call Bonni @ 482-FINE and put your name on her list.

Caboose - a great place for a great price to rent for your event. Only $25.00 with a $10.00 key deposit. Contact Gary McKeever @ 483-4256.

NIFTY (New Initiative for Tourism in Ypsilanti) - no report.

Budget/Events - Carolyn McKeever reports that the **Ypsi Opry** classic country concert is under way in Depot Town. We are still looking for volunteers and hoping for a big turnout, so come down and lend your support so we can support our community year-round. Thanks go out to Dale Richards for making the connections to make this happen and to the Spirit of Ypsilanti, area bar and restaurant owners, for underwriting the ticket printing.

- **Frog Island's** budget has been set @ $25,000. Six bands will perform. Look for expanded food and drink services

- DTA's participation in the **Heritage Jazz Competition** will be limited to bar operations only this year. WEMU's Jim Dulzo will be handling the music production end.

- Sue Dickenson proposed exploring a **concert in the park** series, sponsored by area businesses.

Rag Report - extra, extra, step right up and look for our upcoming issues. Featured in July will be our city's skyline and its stars: the towers of Ypsilanti. And in our August edition we will celebrate the sesquicentennial of the first train to arrive in Depot Town.

2nd Vice Presidents -

Merchants - no report

Artists & Artisans - four members are helping to judge entries for this year's Heritage arts and crafts show.

Antique Dealers - no report

Engineering Society - our neighborhood job corps of kids looking for work. Any odd or regular job that needs doing, just leave word @ The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place.

Other business -

-Edwin Simpson, of North Window Studios in Ann Arbor, made a presentation of **window art.** Edwin has done studies of our neighborhood and created some lovely and eye-catching designs which would compliment any and especially all businesses on our streets. His designs are hand-painted (by himself and an apprentice) on glass using either tempera or latex paints, depending upon the desired longevity. Edwin has been beautifying windows across the country for fifteen years and has impressive examples of his work. He hopes to make Depot Town his first neighborhood project. Bill French and Marc Engebretsen are preparing a proposal to dress up Depot Town which will be presented at next month's meeting.

- DTA's Ypsilanti Area **Chamber of Commerce** membership dues of $155.00 will be paid.

- Mark Cotter, of Finn's JM&J Insurance, will act as DTA's agent in opening correspondence with the City of Ypsilanti regarding **City insurance requirements.**

- Mike Agar of the City's Department of Public Works, reported on the status of a **survey of the land** enclosed by Rice Street, Cross Street and the railroad tracks. The project has turned out to be much more involved than was initially foreseen, even requiring a full-time City employee. The survey is scheduled to be complete near the end of July, 1988. It will clarify, in black and white, ownership, titles, easements, encroachments, rights of way, etc., all very confusing issues in our back yard.

- Mike also informed us of a plan to **screen dumpsters** on the north side of Cross Street and he is hoping to deliver a couple of planters to help clear up pedestrian walkway parking.

-Sue Dickenson, of the City's Department of Community and Economic Development, reported that the **memorial marker** is in time for Memorial Day, along with some **new trees** along Rice Street. We can expect more trees at the pedestrian bridge and repaving at Riverside Park.

—In an ongoing effort to keep **motorized vehicles** out of Frog Island Park, she agreed to follow up on a request made for "NO MOTORIZED VEHICLES ALLOWED" signage to be conspicuously displayed.

-Regarding the **Freight House/Farmers' Market,** Sue had much to report. A **state notice,** months ago, requiring screening of cheese and poultry products set the ball rolling. Rather than take remedial actions, it was decided that it was time to **explore the market's present needs** and how those might impact on the building's future. The City has been exploring issues of structural and aesthetic integrity, historic

-The result, so far, has been the **closing of the east side of the dock,** due to instability. Within two or three weeks, an architectural consultant will be presenting proposals to Market users, events holders and historic preservation groups which will outline solutions to the varied demands placed on the building. Preliminary price quotations for merely reopening the east dock are in the neighborhood of $15,000-25,000 with the City presently offering no funding.

A motion was made and passed that if DTA clears $1000 or more in profits from Frog Island Blues/Jazz Festival, **DTA will donate $1000** toward the repairing of the east dock (passed). The Heritage Festival Committee will match DTA's $1000 contribution.

-Sue Dickenson also reported on the willingness of the City to discuss a **joint venture agreement** relating to the Freight House and its wants and uses.

- **Thanks** to our City connections for coming and keeping us so well infomed.

Monthly awards-

Best Yet - for a tasty addition to our neighborhood, **the Red Rooster,** for its property upgrade and rediscovery of solid copper window frames.

The Golden Goose - to **motorists** roaring or even putting around our peaceful pedestrian parks and walkways.

Next DTA meeting is Thursday June 16th at 7:30 p.m. in The Old Caboose. All are welcome.

Our Little Secret

Resale Clothing & Other Niceties

23 East Cross

Aubree's Saloon
& Second Floor

39 East Cross

Patronize The Merchants That Bring You The

* * * * * * * *

Depot Town Rag

* * * * * * * *

WELCOME
"The Mean Bean"
at 17 East Cross
in historic
Depot Town

RAGTIME
Dancing in the streets
Down in Depot Town

YPSI FOOD COOP
WHOLE NATURAL FOOD IN BULK
OR SMALL QUANTITIES
M.T.Th.F. 10-7 Wed. 10-9 312 N.River
483-1520 Sat. 9-7 Sun. 12-5

Depot Doo
Fine Design in
Hair Style
25 East Cross • 484-3045

Flon's
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46 East Cross 482-2124

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33 East Cross Street
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Antiques Bought & Sold
Hours: Tues - Sun 11-5
Phone (313) 482-4525

City Body, Inc.
20 East Cross
Front Alignments
Special - **$24.95**

Sidetrack
Good Food, Good Drinks,
Good Times
56 East Cross **483-1053**

Ted's Auto Electric
307 North River • 483-1238

B & D Retail
Plumbing & Heating
310 North River 487-1510

Olde Towne
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YPSILANTI, MI 48198
(313) 483-6155

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DEPOT EXCHANGE ANTIQUES
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GENERAL STORE
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With an Eye on The Future
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50 East Cross 485-4930

at the
Ypsilanti Farmers Market
MESSINA'S
CHEESE
459-1995

City Radiator
110 North River
483-2248

Standard Printing
Company
35 E. Cross Street
Ypsilanti, MI 48198
483-0339